

Montana Department of  
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

**Best Beginnings Quality Child Care Initiatives**

**CHILD CARE**

Subject:

**Merit Pay 1**

**Supersedes:** **Child Care Policy Manual Section 7.5 – (05/01/05)**

**References:** **USCS (658G, 658E (C) (3) (B)) ARM 37.80.602**

**General  
Information**

The Montana Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), Merit Pay 1 program was developed with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to young children, by supporting early childhood professionals participating in an early childhood/child development training and education.

All applications are reviewed independently; therefore, each qualifying staff person in a licensed or registered child care facility may be eligible to receive an award.

**Merit Pay 1  
Eligibility**

Early childhood professionals must be working a minimum of 15 hours a week in:

- A registered group or family child care home,
- A licensed child care center,

Applicants must also be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry.

Qualifying individuals who are in the process of applying for child care licensure or registration may apply for Merit Pay 1; however, award funds will not be released unless the licensure/registration process is completed. (The establishment of a PV number in CCUBS provides the necessary verification.)

Merit Pay 1 will be awarded to approved applicants participating in one of two tracks:

1. A 23-hour Track. (Participants completing and verifying 23 hours of pre-approved early childhood training will receive an award of \$250.00)
2. A 50-hour Track. (Participants completing and verifying 50 hours of pre-approved early childhood training will receive an award of \$500.00)

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**Merit Pay 1  
Application  
Process**

Merit Pay 1 applications are available during the month of August and usually the first week of September. Merit Pay 1 applications are available at all Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and at the ECSB.

Merit Pay 1 applications are due in the ECSB no later than 5:00 PM on the stated date in September for each award year. Applicants will be informed by October 1 of each award year regarding the approval or denial of their application.

Individuals may only apply for one Merit Pay program; multiple applications will be automatically denied. Additionally, applicants must indicate which Merit Pay 1 track (23-hour or 50-hour) they wish to participate in.

Application forms must be complete and include all required information and signatures in order to be considered. A complete application must include the following:

1. Proof of employment at a qualifying facility including a child care facility's PV number and the owner/director's signature attesting to the fact the applicant is employed at the facility;
2. An applicant signature;
3. A listing of all proposed training on a Merit Pay 1 Plan of Study (form CC-104a); and
4. A completed form W-9.

**The Merit Pay 1 application and Plan of Study are submitted to DPHHS/ECSB for approval. Applicants are selected for participation in the Merit Pay 1 program, based upon the content and quality of their application, their priority ranking and availability of funds.**

- If a participant does not complete the approved Plan of Study required for the Merit Pay 1, she/he will not receive the Merit Pay 1 award.
- All training and education must address one or more components of the Early Childhood Knowledge Base. The Early Childhood Knowledge Base describes the early childhood competencies an early childhood professional must possess in order to offer high quality early care and education. Training and education may include:
  1. Child Development Associate (CDA) training,
  2. Workshop sessions or other non-credit bearing, early childhood training approved through the Montana Early Care & Education Career Development Training Approval System,

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3. Child and Adult Care Food Program training in excess of the four hours required for participation in that program, as long as the training has been approved through the Montana Early Care & Education Career Development Training Approval System.

The eight hours of training required as a condition of licensure or registration, or to qualify to be an aide or a teacher, in a center is allowed. The hours associated with CPR/First Aid do not count toward the eight hours of mandatory licensing training and will not be counted for Merit Pay 1.

**Priority for  
Merit Pay 1**

Merit Pay 1 priority will be given to participants who:

1. Early childhood professionals who have not previously received the award and are participating in training that leads to completion of a credential such as a Child Development Associate, (CDA), or accreditation through the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCCA) or the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
2. Early childhood professionals who have not previously received Merit Pay 1, who have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field, and who are participating in training in one or more of the Montana Early Care & Education Knowledge Base content areas.
3. Early childhood professionals who have previously received a Merit Pay award and are participating in training that leads to completion of a credential, such as a CDA or accreditation through the National Association of Family Child Care.
4. Early childhood professionals who have not completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field and who have received Merit Pay in the past, who are completing appropriate early care and education training.
5. Early childhood professionals who have completed a credential in early childhood education or a related field.

**Note: A credential is defined as a Child Development Associate (CDA), accreditation, Child Care Development Specialist (CCDS) Apprenticeship, an Associates of Arts (AA) degree, a Bachelor of Arts**

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**(BA) degree, a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree, or other higher education degree.**

**Merit Pay 1  
Summary And  
Proof Of  
Training  
Completion.**

Participants may request payment of their Merit Pay 1 award when they complete the pre-approved training/education. Participants can access their training records by logging on the Early Childhood Project's website and downloading their personal training record or by calling the Early Childhood Project. This information may be obtained at the following web address and phone number:

[www.montana.edu/ecp](http://www.montana.edu/ecp)  
or by calling 1-800-213-6310

Submit all supporting documentation to:

ECSB  
P.O. Box 202925  
Helena, MT 59620-2925

Merit Pay 1 recipients are required to be current members of the Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry. If a participant did not submit a copy of their Montana Practitioner's Registry Certificate at the time of application, they must provide that information when they request their award.

Additionally, participants that were in the process of becoming licensed or registered when they applied for Merit Pay 1, but had not yet completed that process, will need to show proof that a license or registration certificate has been granted before Merit Pay 1 funds will be released.

In order to receive a Merit Pay 1 Award, participants are required to submit a signed summary form that includes an attestation stating that they are working in a facility approved for Merit Pay 1 participation. This form must also be signed by the appropriate owner/director; and include the following attachments:

- Proof of approved training/education from the Early Childhood Project.
- A current copy of their Montana Early Care & Education Practitioner's Registry certificate (If a current copy is not already on file); and
- A current copy of their Montana child care license or registration certificate. (If Merit Pay 1 was granted pending completion of a child

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care license or registration certificate).

Approved Merit Pay 1 training/education must be completed within the program year, which is August 1 through August 31. For example, August 1, 2006 through August 31, 2007. Extensions will not be granted.

#### **CCUBS Process**

Upon receipt of an application the ECSB Contract Specialist will verify the applicant is entered as a 'Person' in the CCUBS system; and review the 'Person' screen to ensure the address matches the address on the Merit Pay 1 application and on the attached W-9. If the applicant is not input as a 'Person' in CCUBS, the ECSB will enter this information based on the Merit Pay 1 application and W-9.

**NOTE: Use the TAB key on the computer keyboard when navigating in CCUBS from box to box on the 'Contract Application' screen.**

1. Applications are logged in on the CCUBS system when they are received in the ECSB office. This is done by entering information on the 'Contract Application' screen.

<b>CCUBS Field</b>	<b>Appropriate Entry</b>
Applicant ID:	The applicant's PS number
Fed Fiscal Year	The appropriate federal fiscal year
Application Date	The date that information is being entered into CCUBS
Application Received	The date the application was date stamped
Contract Type	Merit Pay 1 (MRP)
Application Status	Use the drop-down menu and select <i>Received</i> ;
Effective Date	08-01- [year of application];
Denial Reason	Not used to enter in application requests
End Date	08-31-[year when training must be completed];
Proposal Score	Not used when entering application requests
Application Checklist	Mark the <i>Training/Project</i>

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*Plan.*

2. Applications are prioritized and evaluated for participation in the program.
3. After the applications have been evaluated, the ECSB Program Specialist will update the 'Contract Application' screen in CCUBS. The 'Application Status' will be changed to either *Approved* or *Denied* and saved. If the status is *denied*, the Program Specialist will also be required to enter a denial reason on the screen.
4. CCUBS will generate, and automatically send a denial letter to unsuccessful applicants.
5. Upon approval of the application, the ECSB Contract Specialist will set up the contract for all approved applicants following the steps below:
  - a. On the 'Contract Application' screen in CCUBS, double click the box in the upper right hand corner labeled *Contract No.* This action will take the worker to the 'Contract' screen.
  - b. On the 'Contractor' tab, enter the PS number of the applicant in the white box under Person ID\* and hit the TAB key.
  - c. On the 'Budget' tab, put the cursor in the 'Budget Section' box. Select the Merit Pay 1[FFY] from the Budget Section drop down menu. **Using the mouse** move the cursor into the 'Budget Item' box and enter the following three budget items (Budget Items may be typed in word-specifically or may be selected from a list using the F9 key):
    - ☐ *Training*, hit the TAB key and type \$250 or \$500.
    - ☐ *Advances* hit the TAB key and type in 0.
    - ☐ Click on the SAVE icon.
 At this point, CCUBS will SAVE the screen with a Contract Number
  - d. On the 'Contract Details' tab select the Contract Status drop down menu: highlight 2. *Negotiation Complete*, and SAVE; highlight 3. *Final In-Route Signatures*, and SAVE; highlight 4. *Mailed*, and SAVE; lastly highlight 5. *Executed*, and SAVE.

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6. Letters of approval must be printed in the ECSB central office so that a *Merit Pay 1 Summary* form can be attached and sent to the applicant. In CCUBS, navigate to 'Notifications' and enter the contract number in the appropriate column, hit Execute [F8]. Click on 'View Notification' and print the approval letter from this PDF document.

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